



MEDIA RELEASE

Arrest Made in Connection with Structure Fire

SANTA BARBARA, CA – January 7, 2013

Andrew Gordon Easton, age 41, of Santa Barbara, was arrested for unlawfully causing a structure fire without malice, a felony. This arrest is in connection to the fire that occurred at the former location of Montecito Motors at 530 Chapala Street.

On January 3, 2013, at 12:08 p.m., the Santa Barbara Police Department's Combined Communications Center began receiving multiple calls of a structure fire at 530 Chapala Street, the former location of Montecito Motors. Among the first people to report the fire was SBPD Officer Ethan Ragsdale, who was conducting traffic enforcement nearby. The Santa Barbara City Fire Department, assisted by Santa Barbara County and Montecito Fire resources, responded and extinguished the blaze. Investigators from the Fire Department and Police Department then worked to determine the cause of the fire.

Fire Department investigators determined that the fire started at the exterior western edge of a metal roll-down door of the building. The wood trim surrounding the door ignited, causing a fire that spread up the trim and developed into a major fire to the structure. The fire was likely started by an open flame. Police investigators located a witness who saw a subject extinguishing what appeared to be a small warming fire at the point of ignition at approximately 8:20 a.m. that morning. The witness recognized the subject as a transient who frequently sleeps in the area. Another witness was found who smelled the odor of smoke at approximately 9:00 a.m. but assumed that it was the smell of chimney smoke from a nearby residence.

Police officers familiar with the downtown homeless population knew that Easton frequently camped in the vicinity of the location of the fire. At 12:30 p.m. Officer Rick Cipres located Easton about two blocks away from the fire at the intersection of State Street and Ortega Street. Investigation ultimately determined that Easton was the subject seen extinguishing a fire at the ignition point earlier that morning. Easton declined to make a statement to investigators regarding the fire.

Easton was booked at Santa Barbara County Jail on the aforementioned charge with a bail amount of \$20,000.00.



Easton, Andrew Gordon

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